

Ashley Preston Named 2016 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year

Commissioner of Education Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D., announced that Ashley Preston a preschool teacher at Parker Varney Elementary School in Manchester, is the 2016 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year. In receiving this award, Ms. Preston becomes New Hampshire's candidate for National Teacher of the Year.

"Selecting a Teacher of the Year is an exceptional way to celebrate the many outstanding and dedicated people teaching in New Hampshire schools," said Commissioner Barry. "Every year the selection committee is amazed by how difficult it is to select a recipient to continue the proud tradition of teaching excellence in our state. Ashley will serve as a leader and ambassador for all the outstanding teachers devoted to the highest level of student learning in their classrooms."

Ms. Preston has been teaching for nine years, all of them in the Manchester School District. The selection committee recognized her ability to help her students be curious, critical thinkers and problem solvers. She provides them with a classroom environment that facilitates developmentally appropriate learning while fostering individual strengths. Ashley looks at the whole child and sees the gains they made and then looks at ways to help them continue to grow and make progress. She believes that preschool matters and early childhood education is important and takes every opportunity to show what her students are capable of despite how young they are. Ms. Preston also works at Child Find where she meets with families and demonstrates an understanding and compassion that makes the families feel comfortable. She offers the same support and guidance to her students' families.

Ashley wrote in her application, "Preschool students are often underestimated and I feel fortunate that I can be their voice, help them gain the recognition they deserve and prove their learning is valuable not matter what it looks like from the outside."

Her principal, Amy Allen, wrote in her letter of recommendation, "Ms. Preston is a natural educator. She has found her passion in teaching. She teaches her students to strive for excellence, to love reading, and to care about one another. She teaches all of us at Parker Varney that we are here for the students, to love what you do, to not be afraid to speak up for what is right, that the work we do makes a difference and that our students matter."

New Hampshire Teacher of the Year Finalists are: Laura LaVallee an English teacher at Portsmouth High School; Elizabeth Lounder an English teacher at Winchester School; Christopher Schoff a Mathematics teacher at Portsmouth High School; and Jennifer Thompson a Language Arts and Social Studies teacher at Unity Elementary School.

In New Hampshire, Hannaford Supermarkets is proud to partner with the Department of Education to sponsor the New Hampshire Teacher of the Year program. As a company, Hannaford is committed to enriching the quality of life in the communities it serves. One way to do this is by supporting the Teacher of the Year Program that recognizes the significant contributions made by the many dedicated professionals who choose to make teaching their calling.

Each year, New Hampshire schools take part in the State and National Teacher of the Year Program. The National Teacher of the Year Program is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with the Voya Foundation and People to People Ambassador Programs. The National Teacher of the Year Program began in 1952 and continues as the oldest, most prestigious national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching.

In early December, these finalists and the 2016 NH Teacher of the Year will be invited to a "Leadership in Education Banquet" to celebrate their accomplishments along with other distinguished educators in the State.

The selection process for the 2016 NH Teacher of the Year program was coordinated by a committee including: Jean-Marie Beauchemin, Meat/Seafood/Produce Implementation Team Hannaford 2020; Cindy Chagnon, NH State Board of Education; Ginny Clifford, Bureau of Credentialing, NH Department of Education; Joey Lee, 2014 NH Teacher of the Year; Elizabeth Lichtenberg, 2015 New Hampshire Teacher of The Year; and Peggy McAllister, NH Association of School Principals Executive Director.

For more information about this and other award/recognition programs coordinated through the Department of Education log on to www.education.nh.gov/recognition/index.htm or contact Lori Temple, Public Information Officer at (603) 271-6646 or e-mail Lori.Temple@doe.nh.gov.

To contact Parker Varney School please call (603) 624-6338.

Every day a New Hampshire teacher makes a difference in the life of a child. Every year the NH Department of Education honors outstanding teachers who make their communities, profession, and the world a better place.